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REV. THOMAS A. MORRIS.

Senior Bishop of the M. E. Church

A DISCOURSE

ON

METHODIST CHURCH POLITY.

BY

T. A. MORRIS, D. D.,

SENIOR BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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CINCINNATI:

PUBLISHED BY POE AND HITCHCOCK,

FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, AT THE WESTERN BOOK CONCERN, CORNER OF MAIN AND EIGHTH STREETS.

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TWO HOURS' READING.

TO THE READER.

THE following discourse, in substance, was delivered last spring at the sessions of North Indiana and Pittsburg conferences. Both conferences took action requesting its publication. Many official laymen, some in an associated and others in an individual capacity, have made the same request. To comply at that time was impracticable, as it was not then written. Since, however, doing a little at a time, and persevering for weeks, I have succeeded in transferring it from mind to paper. It embodies my mature thoughts on our

Church polity, or rather an outline of them, after many years of experience and observation. I trust it may help to correct some erroneous impressions, and aid in obtaining a better understanding of a subject interesting to our extended connection.

T. A. MORRIS.

CINCINNATI, AUGUST. 1859.

DISCOURSE

ON

METHODIST CHURCH POLITY.

For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. Colossians ii, 5.

This epistle of Paul is addressed "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse," or to those who not only profess Christianity, but faithfully practice its precepts and experience its saving power. All such are one in spirit. They may differ in speculative theology, in forms of discipline, in modes of worship, and in name, but they are one in heart.

Paul had "great conflict," or fraternal and prayerful solicitude, not only for the brethren who knew him, but also "for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh, that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love." That principle which causes people to love those whom they never saw must be of heavenly origin. "God is love." Religion in the Bible sense is love to God and man. Love in the hearts of Church members unites them to each other and to Christ their living head. It is the bond of Christian union in the Church above and beneath. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." Ephesians i, 10. Our text also affords us further illustration

of the unity of all true Christian hearts. While Paul was absent in body he was present with the Colossian brethren in spirit, rejoicing in their faith and order. The Church of Colosse was a model Church, sound in faith and strict in discipline. These are great elements of ecclesiastical power, and when to them is added the love of God shed abroad in the heart of believers by the Holy Ghost given unto them, the Church is in a safe and prosperous condition. Our subject suggests two leading points for present consideration and examination.

I. FAITH.

Faith is a comprehensive term, admitting of various definitions and applications. In its less important sense it applies to a man's doctrinal views. What is his faith? that is, to what

system of theology does he hold? And here we indorse for every consistent Christian that he believes all Bible truth, especially all truth essential to vital Christianity. Faith in a more important sense is a sure trust and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ as our present, only, and all-sufficient Savior. This is the faith that unites us to Christ, that "works by love and purifies the heart," and saves the soul.

It is needful that our faith in both respects be steadfast. Even in regard to our religious opinions we should be not "carried about with every wind of doctrine;" for to doubt and veer as to our principles and Church relations as often as rival parties may rise and fall is as unsafe as to put to sea without chart, compass, or helm. Before we

adopt any system we should be satisfied that it accords with the Bible, and then stick to it for life. It is, however, still more essential that our faith in the saving sense be steadfastly adhered to. We should walk in Christ as we received him, hold fast the beginning of our confidence, and retain the rejoicing of our hope firmly to the end; for "he that shall endure to the end the same shall be saved." This is all we have time to say on the first part of the subject, and it is, perhaps, sufficient to suggest the need of our ecclesiastical organization now to be considered.

II. ORDER.

The term order in this connection properly applies to Church discipline and its administration. It will be conceded by all competent judges that government of some sort or other in

the Church is requisite to her peace and prosperity. This is true of all associations, whether voluntary or involuntary. What would be the condition of your family without family government? Or of your schools without strict rules of propriety and order? Or of your state without wholesome laws duly administered? Or of your army without strict military discipline? And what would become of the peace, purity, and prosperity of the Church without "rules and regulations" strictly enforced? All would be in a state of anarchy and confusion, doomed to wreck and ruin. Corrupt practices would creep in, confidence would be destroyed, and discord and hatred would supersede peace and love.

We do not contend, however, that any specific form of Church govern-

ment is essential. The Gospel is destined to prevail among all nations, and their social and political conditions are so diversified that the same prudential rules and regulations would not be applicable to all of them. These prudential rules and regulations may, therefore, be safely varied to any needful extent not inconsistent with the Bible, which is the constitutional law of the Church generally. In the civil department of society all governments are comprehended under three heads; to wit, monarchy, aristocracy, and republicanism. A monarchy is a government in the hands of an individual. Aristocracy places the power to govern in the hands of a few; while republicanism leaves it with the people generally, to be exercised directly or through their chosen representatives. And while

there is a decided preference between these forms of government, it is possible for a man to be a patriot and a loyal citizen under either of them. So we believe. And in like manner all Church governments are comprehended under three forms in a general sense, namely, episcopal, presbyterial, and congregational, each of which, however, is susceptible of modification. Here we use the term episcopal, not in the sense of our moderate, well-guarded superintendency, but as it is used by Papists and High Churchmen, as expressive of a third and superior order of ministers. A presbyterial Church government is one chiefly in the hands of presbyters or ministers; and a congregational Church government is one allowing each local congregation to act independently of all others, managing

all Church matters for itself, irrespective of a connectional relation. It would be safe to admit the possibility of a man's being a Christian under either of the three. The government of the Methodist Episcopal Church is peculiar. It is not entirely analogous to either of the above-named systems, but does, as we think, embody the better features of them all, and exclude their objectionable ones. It is eminently practical; was not formed by theorizing, but is the result of experience. As Methodism arose and progressed, where the want of a rule was felt to aid the work it was adopted. If its practical working was found to be good it was retained, but if not good, it was modified or abolished. Thus each prudential regulation has been brought to the test of experience and practical utility, one

page of which is worth more than a volume of theory. We now turn our attention to some of the more important points of Methodist Church polity. It is believed to be entirely proper, and we trust profitable, to call the attention of our ministers and members to our own system of Church government. In doing so we do not infract the rights or break the peace of any other ecclesiastical organization. We do not expect, however, in one discourse to compass the entire system, but hope to present a rapid outline view of its essential parts and practical working.

THE STARTING-POINT.

In Methodism the starting-point is the love of God as developed in redemption, in the gift of the Spirit, and the divine call to the work of the min-

istry. Without redemption there is no possible salvation for sinners; without the Holy Spirit there could be no personal application of the benefits of redemption; and without some one be called to teach us we should remain ignorant of our blood-bought privileges, as Paul said to the Romans, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" Now, suppose a nation in which there is not one experimental, practical Christian; how would the saving knowledge of the truth first be communicated? To convert souls is God's work, but he usu-

ally employs human instrumentality to teach them their lost condition and their remedy. We say usually, but not necessarily, for he can work with or without outward means. He, however, so far as we know and believe, employs only such as possess the knowledge necessary to be imparted to others. Sinners can not savingly enlighten each the other. It requires a converted man to get other men converted, or they must be operated on by the Holy Spirit independent of human interference. Then to originate a work of saving grace we may rationally conclude, where there are no examples of it previously, God must do one of two things: first, he would send a converted man from some Christian country, to teach, warn, and invite souls to Christ; or, secondly, he would, by his

word and Spirit, awaken, enlighten, and call some sinner, grant him repentance, faith, pardon, regeneration, and adoption, and then send him out among his neighbors to tell them what the Lord had done for him and was willing to do for them. In either case there is a missionary in the field. And when he gets one soul converted he has one witness and one helper. Their united influence will prevail with others, and the work will enlarge itself till the number will require an understanding as to the terms of fellowship.

A LITTLE ORGANIZATION.

When converts are multiplied from units to tens, some kind of organization becomes necessary to maintain unity and peace. They may begin with a record of the names of all the

converts or persons proposed for membership. These form the nucleus of the Church. The missionary pastor and his children in the Gospel are of one heart and mind. To remain so they must adopt some simple code based on the Bible, defining their faith and practice. They must agree on the Scriptural standards of morality and godliness to prevent future difficulty. Also, the respective rights and duties of pastor and members, when and where they will meet for religious worship, and what shall be the order of their public and social exercises. They will likewise need certain officers to promote the interests of the society in its various departments, and strengthen the hands and hearts of pastor and people. They who are strong in faith, gifted in prayer, and apt to teach are

appointed leaders of prayer meetings and class meetings. Active and pious sisters may be highly useful among the serious, the sick, and the poor. Such brethren as may possess deep piety, sound judgment, and business habits are elected stewards and take charge of the secular affairs of the Church. They who have financial skill and general influence in Church extension are chosen as trustees. And such as have aptitude to teach and manage children and youths are assigned to the Sabbath school department. Thus they proceed to perfect the little organization so as to bring their entire force into requisition.

Again: as such local societies or Churches come up in other places, attention becomes necessary to connectional arrangements. All the societies

wishing to belong to the ecclesiastical confederation and come under the same general jurisdiction must adopt the same articles of faith and rules of discipline, for "how can two"—or more—"walk together except they be agreed?" By such union the societies mutually strengthen and encourage each other. In an early stage of the process of organization it becomes indispensable to settle fully and securely the

TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP.

As the work progresses and prospers many persons may desire admission, and some, perhaps, not regarded as suitable to be received, and others already received not profitable to be retained. Mere personal preference is not a safe rule. Religious experience and moral deportment must be re-

garded as the standards of qualification. Our fathers who gave us the outline of our present system of Methodist discipline, made a capital hit when they adopted the rule requiring a probation of at least six months prior to regular membership, a rule still enforced in all cases, excepting such as bring letters of recommendation from orthodox sister Churches as worthy members. The condition of admission on trial is, "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from sin." But this desire, to become available, must be evinced in three ways: "First. By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind," etc.; "Secondly. By doing good," etc.; "Thirdly. By attending upon all the ordinances of God," etc. If the pastor knows the candidate to come up to this standard

he can admit him on trial at once. But in the absence of such personal knowledge the rule is, "Let none be admitted on trial except they are recommended by one you know, or till they have met twice or thrice in class," so as to form some opinion of their fitness. The wisdom of this rule is apparent on the face of it. To profess a change of heart and to make some show of outward reformation are easy; but a probation of six months, subjecting the candidate to weekly class examination both as to his religious exercises and daily deportment, is a much safer test of sincerity and consistency than a single profession at any one time. The conditions of full membership after probation are three. First, a recommendation by a leader with whom the candidate has met at least

six months on trial, who has every opportunity to know his religious state, daily walk, and general bearing. Secondly, he must be consecrated to God in baptism, either in infancy or adult age, this being the initiating ordinance into the visible Church of Christ. Thirdly, he must, "on examination by the minister in charge, before the Church, give satisfactory assurances both of the correctness of his faith and his willingness to observe and keep the rules of the Church." These conditions are few and simple, but indispensable; and taken altogether they show conclusively that our Church is at least as well guarded against imposition in the reception of members as any other Church. When any one has fully complied with them the pastor, in the name and on the behalf of the

whole Church assembled, extends to him the right hand of fellowship, and pronounces him a member. We have been thus particular in noticing the entire process of receiving members because many uninformed people suppose that we have first a low standard of qualification for Church membership, and secondly, that we are too lax in maintaining it. Both are mistaken suppositions. In addition to the foregoing rules the pastor is required to "read the rules to them"—the probationers—"the first time they meet." Also, "the official minister or preacher shall, at every quarterly meeting, read the names of those that are received into the Church, and also those that are excluded therefrom." See Discipline, Part 1, Section 2.

ACQUIRED RIGHTS.

By becoming a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church you acquire rights which you never had before, and never could have possessed without such membership. And, first, you secure an interest in all the Church property, which, in houses of worship, parsonages, cemeteries, and institutions of learning, with their ground plats, amount to at least twenty millions of dollars. There may be a few houses of worship occupied by our preachers and people which are not regularly conveyed to the whole Church, but are held in trust for the use of the local societies connected therewith; in these your connection with the Church at another place gives you no title. Such deeds of conveyance are unfortunate. They are not

according to our Discipline, and we may hereafter be turned out of such houses if the local authorities holding them should become disaffected toward our Church. Now, we do not say that brethren holding and occupying such houses are not good Christians or good Methodists, but we do say that their title to the property is not Methodistical. When tried by our "Form of a Deed of Settlement" it is found defective. But when property is regularly conveyed and held in trust "for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America," as her rules require, then every member of that Church is a joint stock owner in the whole concern. It is true that the number of stockholders is large, and the shares, of course, small; yet they

are desirable as identifying our interest with that of the Lord's people, and giving us some claim on his earthly courts. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temples." Psalm lxv, 4. Secondly, by becoming a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church you have acquired a full share in all her privileges. This includes an interest in her sympathies, her prayers, and her ample means of religious instruction and encouragement; in her ordinances, including the holy eucharist, and in her powerful ministry and pastoral oversight. You have secured a right to attend and participate in all her religious meetings for public and social worship, whether for expounding and hearing the Gospel, for prayer and praise, or for mutual edification by reciting

personal experience. You have all the privileges found in any other evangelical Church, with class meeting and love-feast into the bargain, two choice means of religious improvement at once profitable and delightful. Without intending any offense to others, we here say there is no Church in this country blessed with a more spiritual living membership than ours is, though there is much room for improvement among us; no Church affords more helps or better encouragement to a godly life than ours does. And as to our doctrinal views, we have never had occasion to waste much time or strength in adjusting them, for our unity in this respect has been unparalleled from the beginning of our history to the present time. None of our losses by secession were occasioned by doctrinal contro-

versy, but always arose out of conflicting views on questions of expediency—views intemperately urged by brethren of a restless spirit and a reckless purpose. Certainly our doctrinal unity is cause of devout thankfulness to the whole Methodist family. Thirdly, these acquired rights are secured to you on such a firm constitutional basis that no earthly power can deprive you of them till you willfully forfeit them by disobedience to or some personal violation of the rules of the Church. The idea of some that a Methodist preacher has power in himself to dispossess a layman of his membership in any case is entirely groundless. That he had such authority once in the infancy of Methodism is admitted, but it was found to be unsafe for the members, and was therefore taken from him at an early

period. Nothing that a member can do authorizes a pastor to exclude him till he is regularly tried and found guilty by his fellow-laymen. And if any preacher in charge were to exclude a member without a disciplinary trial, such preacher would receive severe censure by the conference where he is amenable, and justly, too. There are, however, several ways in which a private member may forfeit his own rights; and,

First, he may remove his residence without a certificate of membership, or he may take one with him but never hand it in, and thereby his name is lost from the Church roll. Thus hundreds and perhaps thousands move out of the Church annually, and, as a matter of course, lose their religious standing.

Secondly, a member in regular standing may at any time, by general usage

and common consent, withdraw from the Church, and thereby relinquish all his acquired rights. The Church is not a prison, but a voluntary association; and if brethren keep the rules while members, they may quietly go out as they came in, with the consent of the proper Church authorities.

Thirdly, any member who willfully and habitually neglects his religious duties or persists in disobedience to the order of Discipline, renders himself liable to reproof, 1, by his leader; 2, by his pastor; then, if not reclaimed, he should be cited to answer before the society or a select number, and if found guilty and incorrigible, the rule is to exclude him. But we make a distinction between merely excluding a useless member for such offenses and expelling him for crime. The idea is to get clear of

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him in the easiest legal way, leaving him where we found him, fixing no stigma on his moral character for mere neglect or disobedience to rule.

Fourthly, a member charged with immorality receives a copy of the charges in due time, with a notice to appear before a committee and answer, where he has liberty to defend himself, aided by any other member of the same pastoral charge. If found guilty the preacher in charge, as the organ of the Church, is required to expel him. But he has the right of appeal to the next quarterly conference, which is generally a large, intelligent body of brethren, selected for their wisdom and piety, embracing all the class-leaders, stewards, exhorters, and local preachers of the circuit or station and the traveling preachers stationed there for the

time being. Please observe, the appeal is not to the presiding elder except on law questions, but to the quarterly conference, and that body is bound to entertain it, except where the appellant refused to attend the trial, and may dispose of the appeal in one of three ways, namely: If the trial has been illegal it may be set aside and a new trial ordered. But if the appeal be tried on its merits the case can only be reversed or affirmed. If the decision of committee be reversed the appellant is restored; but if affirmed, his expulsion is ratified. Even this is not necessarily an end of the case; the expelled may complain to the annual conference of the administration, and if that body decide that he was expelled contrary to rule, he is thereby restored and the administrator censured. But

if all these actions fail, he is finally out, and becomes to us as a heathen and a publican. "After such forms of trial and expulsion, such person shall have no privileges of society or of sacraments in our Church without contrition, confession, and satisfactory reformation."

Here we take occasion to say there is no Church, the rights of whose members are more firmly secured than those of our own. The rules are right in themselves, based on Bible principles of justice and propriety, and give us little or no trouble. But unfortunately they are sometimes badly administered, and that occasions difficulty. For example, in a few cases the stewards and leaders' meeting is made a standing tribunal to investigate all matters of complaint against Church members,

which is not only unauthorized, but is really unjust. Stewards and leaders are members of the quarterly conference; if they try and condemn a brother and he take an appeal, to whom does he appeal? The same judges from whom he appeals, which is mockery. Let it be understood now and ever that no member of the quarterly conference should ever be on the committee of trial below. The duties of a stewards' and leaders' meeting are few, simple, and specific; namely, each leader reports to the pastor his sick and delinquent members, and to the stewards his weekly collections for the preachers, Church, and poor, and the business is done, except when there are probationers to be recommended for membership, or an application for recommendation for license, which is the only item that requires

either discussion or vote. Yet, not content with doing all the Discipline directs, the stewards and leaders occasionally assume legislative prerogatives, and make rules affecting terms of membership and try to enforce them. Again, they assume to be a judicial tribunal, and try offending members. But they have no more authority for either than they have to perform the functions of the President's cabinet at the city of Washington. To prevent discord every department of Church authority must adhere strictly to its own appropriate business and not interfere with that of any other, then the whole system moves harmoniously.

THE MINISTRY.

Between the members and pastors there are active agents for good; class-

leaders, exhorters, and local preachers. The leaders are appointed by the preacher in charge to aid him in his pastoral work of visitation and prayer and instruction. Exhorter's license is granted by the pastor on recommendation of the members, and renewed annually on that of the quarterly conference. Local preacher's license is granted by the quarterly conference on the recommendation of their respective societies, and renewed annually when their gifts, grace, and usefulness will warrant such renewal. Local preachers are eligible to deacon's orders in four years, and to elder's orders in eight years. There are in our Church over 7,000 local preachers, deacons, and elders. Among so many there may be some drones, but in general they are worthy brethren, co-operating with the

regular pastors to extend the kingdom of Christ. Many of them are able ministers, but having no pastoral charge they pursue some secular business for a living through the week, and on Sabbath serve the Church for nothing and find themselves. To their praise be it said, they are, with perhaps a few exceptions, loyal to Methodism, and deserve well of the Church and public to whom they minister gratuitously, regularly, or as occasional supplies. The pastors proper in our Church are regular traveling preachers. How they become such is a question worthy of special consideration. There are two general systems of preparing men for the Gospel ministry. One is to select boys who may or may not be converted, and who subsequently may or may not be called of God to preach

and educate them *for* the ministry. But our system is to receive young men who are both converted and called, in the judgment of their brethren, and train them *in* the ministry, uniting the study and practice of theology all the way through. This we have proved to be a successful system of training ministers. The details of our system are briefly these: A young man feels himself moved by the Holy Spirit to the work of the ministry. His brethren where he resides being acquainted with him and his gifts and graces, become convinced there is a dispensation of the Gospel committed to him, and after proper trial, recommend him to quarterly conference for license. Here he is examined as to his belief of our doctrine and Discipline; also, his experience and call to the work. This

examination is conducted by the presiding elder in presence of the conference, and if approved he is granted license to preach. But this does not make him a traveling preacher. Next, after proper trial of him as a preacher, he is recommended by the quarterly to the annual conference for admission on trial as a traveling preacher. If received he is assigned to a field of labor, usually as the colleague of a more experienced minister. Then there is given him a course of study, embracing science and theology, and extending through four years. He is now, in college parlance, admitted to the freshman class, a class which the past year numbered 552. His daily business now is to read, study, pray, preach, exhort, and visit the sick and the serious. At the end of the year

he appears before a committee of examination on the course of study. When his name is called before the conference, the committee for the first year reports on his studies, and his presiding elder on his ministry in the circuit. If approved, he is by vote continued on trial, and passes into the sophomore class, where he reads, studies, prays, preaches, exhorts, and visits as before. At the end of the second year, having passed another examination, he appears before conference, and agrees to do many things, among which are these: To keep the rules of the Church and attend her sacraments; to devote himself wholly to God and his work; to visit from house to house, and diligently instruct the children in every place. In a word, that he will act as a son in the Gospel, and do that part of

the work which we advise, at those times and places which we judge most for God's glory. After these pledges the committee reports on his studies, and the presiding elder on his work. Then, if approved, he is admitted into full connection and elected and ordained deacon, and promoted to the junior class. The following year, if approved, he enters the class of seniors, at the end of which he reviews the whole course, and, passing in the committee and conference, he is elected elder and inducted into the full ministry. He has now made full proof of his ministry, and adopted it as the work of his lifetime. Hereafter he has only to pass the annual examination of character in common with other brethren. This is a usage peculiar to Methodism. In all the annual conferences we call the

name of every preacher, from presiding elder down to probationer, and ask, Is there any thing against him? If there be any thing against him as a man, as a Christian, or as a minister, he must give a satisfactory explanation, or be held to account. This in our Church polity is an indispensable rule. Our interchanging itinerancy makes it so. We sometimes send a preacher where the people have little or no personal knowledge of him, yet they are safe in receiving him, 1, because they know the conference has indorsed him; 2, because they know the conference does not indorse doubtful characters. In regard to examination of character there is no exception, for no brother is eligible to any appointment till his character passes.

We have noted briefly the ordinary

process by which an itinerant minister becomes such. Before we lose sight of him one item more should be referred to—that of his support. He has left all for this work. May be he was a farmer, or mechanic, or teacher, or merchant, or physician, or lawyer—no matter what, he has dropped his secular business and relinquished his worldly prospects to devote his life to the ministry. He has done so, 1, because he believed God called him to it; 2, because the Church recognized that call, and encouraged him at every step to proceed; it hence follows conclusively that the Church is responsible for his support while he remains at his post. It is a small affair any how. Each preacher's allowance is fixed by the people of his own charge through a committee of estimation, whose report is reviewed by

the quarterly conference. So much for house rent, fuel and table expenses, added to his quarterage, the aggregate is usually not large enough to impoverish any community. The contract is one-sided; those who pay it fix the sum themselves. Now, when a minister is regularly appointed, and his allowance is agreed on and settled, the brethren whom he serves are as much bound in honesty to pay his claim as they are to pay their store bills and taxes. So we think. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel," is the law of the New Testament.

PRESIDING ELDERS.

The office of presiding elder is simply one of appointment by the bishop

for executive purposes. A presiding elder's district includes about twelve pastoral charges, more or less, each of which he visits four times a year to preach, administer the ordinances, and hold quarterly conference. He takes charge of all the elders and deacons, the traveling and local preachers and exhorters in the district, and is required to see that every part of the Discipline is carried out; that the interests of the missionary, Sabbath school, and tract causes are properly cared for. He presides in the appeal trial of excluded members, and decides all questions of law in quarterly conference. He also directs young men to their course of studies, and examines the candidates for orders; he receives, employs, and changes preachers in the interval of conference and absence of the bishop;

and such as are disorderly he brings to account by committee, or reports them to conference. He also is consulted by the bishop as to the arrangement of the work and appointment of the preachers to it, etc. It will be seen readily how important this office is to the great itinerant system. If this part of the machinery be removed, the whole is in confusion. An error in selecting the officer is no argument against the office. The people might prefer a popular preacher on the district, but sound judgment, and executive skill, and administrative ability are much more important in a presiding elder than popular talent in the pulpit; at least, this is the opinion of such as have most experience. The office first appears on the Minutes of 1785, when an elder's name stands at the head of

each district, but without the prefix "presiding" till 1789, just seventy years ago, since which period the Minutes in this respect have been uniform. A usage of seventy-four years' standing is entitled to respectful consideration. It has, however, higher claims than age confers on the score of utility. The experiment has proved itself successful. No prudential regulation in our Church has done so much to render our itinerant ministry effective, except the general superintendency, as the office of presiding elder. But recently there has been prejudice against it in certain localities, chiefly, we presume, on the ground of its expense. The allowance of a presiding elder is estimated by a meeting of stewards, composed of one from each circuit and station in the district, elected for the pur-

pose by the quarterly conferences respectively, and the amount is apportioned among them. Some brethren regard the elder's claim as a useless burden, and ask, Why should he supersede our pastor, who preaches as well as he can, four Sabbaths of the year? Such brethren, it seems, take it for granted that the chief, if not only business of a presiding elder is to preach, which is only one of his many duties. We should like them to remember, also, that the same authority that sent them their pastor appointed their presiding elder to hold for them four quarterly meetings a year, and that they have no more right to repudiate the claim or dispense with the services of one than of the other. There are a few preachers and members who think the office, if ever it was needed,

ceases to be so, and ought to be abolished. When a traveling preacher takes this position, allow us to ask, is it because he fears to get into trouble, and does not care to have a presiding elder about to rein him up before a committee, or to report him to conference? When a local preacher takes it, does he expect to be tried, and would he prefer, in that event, that the pastor who brought him before a committee and suspended him, should preside on his trial proper in quarterly conference rather than the presiding elder, who is disinterested and expert in questions of the sort? Or if a member who wants no presiding elder should be expelled and take an appeal, would he wish the pastor who passed sentence upon him to preside over his appeal trial rather than the presiding elder?

May be he would prefer all this to paying the presiding elder's claim. Well, if the office of presiding elder be done away, something analogous to it must be substituted, or our system will be crippled. And I give my judgment in advance, that nothing can be substituted equal to it in simplicity, efficiency, or economy. There are others who desire the office retained but modified, so as to avoid the expense. They wish each presiding elder appointed to a pastoral charge, and paid there like other stationed preachers, but to retain his official relation as chairman of the district. Here I would ask those economists, would they be willing to take the presiding elder for their pastor and support him, he giving one-half to three-fourths of his time to the interests of other charges? If not, why wish to

lay the burden upon others? Upon the whole, I wish to record my opinion in favor of retaining the office of presiding elder with as little modification as may be. Long and well-tried rules which have accomplished much good should never be hastily abandoned for new and doubtful experiments. We have as much need of presiding elders now as we ever had.

THE APPOINTING POWER.

This pertains to the general superintendency. We have now six bishops, neither of whom claims any local diocese. They are jointly responsible for the oversight of the whole connection; they divide it into six parts, each taking his route for one year, and then changing, so that each in his turn presides in all the conferences. One of

our official duties is "to fix the appointments of the preachers" under certain rules of limitation well understood among us. In our peculiar organization many individual rights are relinquished for the general good. Ministers relinquish any real or supposed right of preference for places, with an understanding that the members are not to choose their pastors but to receive whomsoever are sent. This is as fair for one party as the other. Of course the execution of such a system requires the agency of a third party, the bishops. Now, the Church has confidence in the appointing power or she has not. If she possess confidence in us, why complain of our action in the premises? If confidence be wanting, why not remove the appointing power into other hands? By a certain

constitutional process the power to appoint the preachers might be transferred from the bishops to a committee of preachers and laymen, or, what would virtually amount to the same thing, abolished entirely, leaving ministers and members free to make their own arrangements. But what then would be the fate of itinerancy? What the prospect of our mission to "preach the Gospel to every creature?" A dozen charges might claim the same popular preacher, and as many preachers the same good-paying station, and who would decide? But worse yet, what would become of that circuit with long rides, hard work, rough fare, and poor pay? As it is, we man all the work, the ministers alternating between good appointments and poor ones, and the people are saved, which is securing the

main object of our mission. To enable us to make the appointments properly, full information of the work and the laborers is needful. How is it obtained? Chiefly through the presiding elders, who form our council of advice. When our preachers were few, with only a few fields to cultivate, Bishop Asbury, having personal knowledge of the whole, made the appointments himself with little difficulty. The preachers were then mostly bachelors and boys, without the care of families, and there was no figuring over their support. The case now is materially changed. We have now nearly six thousand effective traveling preachers, and most of them have families to move and be provided for, so that to adjust them to the work without oppression to them or to the people is a herculean task.

It involves a fearful responsibility, and they who have to bear it are more deserving of sympathy than of censure. Some have suggested to dispense with presiding elders altogether, elect a bishop for every large conference and one for every two small ones, and let him make the appointments from personal knowledge. This plan would not work so well as the present. To obtain that knowledge he must visit, preach, and advise with leading brethren in every charge, over one hundred in all. To succeed he must spend at least one Sabbath in each charge, which, in a conference of average size, would require two years. The year ending when the bishop is half round, what does he know of the half not visited, and what of the changes in nine or ten months where he first visited? But

the presiding elders, whose districts cover the whole ground, visit the charges each four times, and come up well informed as to the wants and wishes of preachers and people, and laying all before the bishop, with their suggestions, he can proceed with confidence of affording, in general, tolerable satisfaction. There is another difficulty in such multiplication of bishops. How would they be supported? The Book Concern pays six of us, but could not pay forty or more. Their claim would come back on the members, and if they object to paying a presiding elder who visits them quarterly, how much more to paying a bishop for one visit in two years? My own opinion is, the wisdom of man can make but little improvement on our present system. Bishop Asbury said truly, "Lo-

cal men have local views." We meet the proof at every step of our oversight. The denizens of an infant city looking up seem to be just under the greatest altitude of the arched heavens, the horizon closing down all around them, from which they feel sure that their city is precisely in the center of the world, and, of course, will soon control its commerce and command the respect of all civilized nations. And, for reasons quite as good, the brethren of each pastoral charge think their station is the most important of any in the conference, and should have the best preacher, whether they can support him or not. Here we could furnish amusing examples, but we forbear for want of time and room. Even the ministry is not entirely free from local partiality. Each presiding elder keeps

a sharp look-out for his own district, that it may be well manned at every point, whatever befalls other districts. But as the presiding elders generally understand their own districts, and how to guard their interests, we set one over against the other, and usually close up the account with a clean balance sheet. Again: the brethren of each annual conference seem to regard their territory as nearly, if not quite, the headquarters of the Methodist confederation, and, of course, entitled to special consideration. To meet emergencies, the bishops have occasionally to take brethren where they can find them, and supply the vacancies as well as they can. When we transfer a young man of promise to fill some distant post they say, "He is our man; we brought him into the work and trained him for

our own important territory, and to remove him to another conference is unfair; let other conferences raise their own men as we do." But we who are bound to provide for the whole, proceed on the principle that Methodism in all the conferences is one concern, and that the strong should aid the weak. Again: when a brother comes into a conference by transfer, and receives such an appointment as he had usually filled where he came from, the brethren are too apt to feel envious toward him, and say, Why is this stranger placed in the good positions of our conference. where we have borne the burden and heat of the day? In reply we ask, Is not a reputation as a Methodist preacher earned there as good as if it were earned here? Again: if those envious ones should ever be transferred to

another conference, would they be willing to fill appointments inferior to those usually given them in their own conference, especially if called for by the people in better places? A good rule works both ways. Now, all these difficulties, arising out of local views and conflicting local interests, furnish arguments for leaving the appointing power in disinterested hands. A Methodist bishop has a little of Paul's experience: "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches." Our relation is precisely the same to East Maine conference and to Cincinnati conference, to Minnesota conference and to Baltimore conference, and so of all the rest. It is our duty to care for the entire connection of preachers and members, and, as far as practica-

ble, have them all provided for. "And who is sufficient for these things?" We do not say that we are, for bishops are but men. We have in common with others the weaknesses of humanity. All we claim in the premises is, that our position in the work is favorable to a general understanding of its wants, and to an impartial supply of them for the good of the whole.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE.

Thus far we have discoursed chiefly on the executive affairs of our Church, but now turn our attention for a few minutes only to her rule-making department. The General conference is composed of delegates from all the annual conferences, who collectively represent and act for the entire connection of ministers and members. They meet

quadrennially, and remain in session about one month, and do more business than Congress does in six months, for, as a body, they are marked for ability, order, and dispatch. Besides revising the Discipline, they elect bishops, book agents, editors, corresponding secretaries for the missionary, Sabbath school, and tract societies, and regulate the publishing interests of the whole Church. They fix the boundaries of all the annual conferences, try appeals of expelled or censured traveling preachers, adjust the general finances of the Church, and examine carefully the administration of the annual conferences as recorded in their respective journals. They also are the tribunal to which the bishops are amenable, and hold them to strict account, both for their personal conduct and official administra-

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tion—all of which is right and proper. As to their legislative authority, the Discipline declares: "The General conference shall have full power to make rules and regulations for our Church under the following limitations and restrictions." So it appears that, while that body possesses much delegated power, there are certain things which it can not do. We here name some of them. "The General conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion, nor establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine." Then, if all the delegates become heterodox, they can not make us so by changing our creed. "They shall not revoke or change the General Rules of the United Societies." For they are our moral

code or summary of Bible precepts, and express clearly the terms on which we can retain our standing in the Church. To change the General Rules, therefore, is to change our terms of membership, which can not be done except by the constitutional process. Again: "They shall not do away the privileges of our ministers or preachers of trial by a committee and of an appeal; neither shall they do away the privileges of our members of trial before the society or by a committee and of an appeal;" and we are glad of it. There are other things in which they are restricted in like manner. Yet any of these restrictions, except the one covering our Articles of Religion, may be removed by the concurrent action of three-fourths of all the voters of all the annual conferences and two-thirds of the General

conference. In all things not thus restricted the delegates are free to act for the whole Church. Some think that they possess too much power, but we think they have no more than the good of Methodism requires. The fear that they may ruin the Church is not well founded. All such alarmists are more scared than hurt. I have attended the last nine quadrennial sessions, four of them as a member and five as a presiding officer, and have ever found them disposed to regard the general good as far as they understood it. I have never known them to refuse to pass any new rule generally desired, or to hesitate to repeal one generally offensive. It is true they do not obey the dictation of a few visionary men, who may demand what would be a grief to nineteen-twentieths of the whole

Church, and herein they act wisely. The generally-expressed wish of ministers and members within constitutional bounds is the measure of General conference action. So it should be, so it has been, so it practically is, and so it is likely to continue. Where, then, is the danger so much dreaded by some? The leading men of the Church understand her constitution, and will not override it; they know her true interests, and will endeavor to promote them by revision of rules and otherwise. The Discipline is, upon the whole, much improved recently, and may be in some few particulars made still better. But to these items I may not refer in this connection. My object is to explain our system rather than to make additions to it. The General conference will do this if nec-

essary. The rest of what I have to say will come chiefly under the head of

OBJECTIONS.

Objection First. The ministers have every thing their own way, and the members have no check upon them.

If this were true the objection would be serious and weighty. To say that our laymen are without influence over their pastors, apart from any Disciplinary arrangements, would be a poor compliment to their intelligence. But viewed in the light of rule and usage, the objection is ridiculous, and is urged only by those who are ignorant of our system. Among the checks which the membership hold upon the ministry we will name two: First. Our dependence on them for men to keep up the ministerial force to carry on the work. All

the conferences, both annual and General united, could not make one traveling preacher, without the pre-action of the lay members recommending him for that purpose. The rules are explicit and indispensable: 1. "No person shall be licensed to preach without the recommendation of the society of which he is a member, or of a leaders' meeting;" and, 2, in answer to the question, "How is a preacher to be received on trial?" the rule is, "By the annual conference. But no one shall be received unless he first procure a recommendation from the quarterly conference of his circuit or station." Thus we see it requires a two-fold action of lay members to get a start as a traveling preacher—one to obtain his license, and another to secure his admission on trial. And to prevent imposition, both

actions must be taken where he resides and is best known, in his society, and his circuit or station. Now, if the members of our Church should ever come to the conclusion that the preachers are corrupt men and no longer desirable, all they have to do to exterminate us is to shut down that gate, send us no more candidates, and the work is done. The present incumbents will die off at first at the rate of fifty to a hundred a year; and as no young men are added, the older we get the faster we will die, so that in a few years the Methodist ministry would be among the things that have been and are not. The second check which the members hold over their ministers is in the form of material aid. We are as dependent on them for the means as we are for the men to carry on the work. With-

out their aid in money we could not build churches or found any high institutions of learning; we could not support our foreign missions or home work. Even the support of our regular pastors is all on the voluntary principle; no member is compelled against his own will to pay a cent. Now, therefore, if you are tired of our ministry, just pull the purse-strings a little tighter, and hold on with a miserly grasp, and you have us in your power. In three months you can produce friction; in six months you can lock the wheels of itinerancy; and in one year you can break down the whole concern of Methodism. The starvation argument is powerful; it pleads directly to the inner man; apply it generally as it has occasionally been applied in a few special cases, and we must all "back

down" at once. But it will not be done. Our people know their own interests too well and appreciate them too highly for that. Besides they are improving in liberality faster than any thing else. Here then the objection falls to the ground. The people know their own power to withhold both men and means, and these are all the checks they need over us to keep us to our proper places.

Objection Second. The members are not allowed any representation in the conferences.

This is, in fact, the most formidable objection to Methodist polity that can be brought, and, as far as it is truthful, we shall "own up" and try to harmonize conflicting views, or, at least, to lessen needless prejudice. We concede, first, that the present represent-

ation of members is indirect, more so than would be satisfactory in civil affairs. As citizens you vote for electors, and they elect a President, or, in case of failure, the election goes to Congress, and in either case you are represented. In our Church all traveling preachers are first approved by the lay members, as we have fully explained, and, when received, become the electors to appoint delegates from among themselves to General conference, where they feel that they act for the members as much as for the preachers. It is, therefore, not exactly correct to say, the members are not allowed *any* representation, though, as we said, it is only indirect. The members, however, act a more prominent part in administering the rules than in making them. We concede, secondly, that if the members of

our Church really desire a direct representation in the conferences, with all its expense, trouble, and responsibility, they should have it. As yet, however, there is no evidence that such representation is generally desired by them. We doubt whether one member in fifty desires it, and certainly not one in a hundred has ever asked for it. In this movement the preachers are in advance of the members, asking for them what they have not asked for themselves. If the members generally ever do request it, the General conference will respond with fraternal kindness, as they always have done. But, thirdly, while we should not oppose a reasonable and well-guarded lay representation, we are persuaded that such a plan as has been suggested by some would bring embarrassment instead of relief. It is pro-

posed to have as many lay delegates in General conference as there are of clerical; that the lay members shall be equal in number to that of ministers in the annual conferences, and the number of laymen in the bishop's council shall be equal to that of presiding elders. But here let it be remembered, the General conference already numbers about 250 delegates; double the number, and you have a deliberative body of 500. Then, instead of one month to hold a session, we shall need two. Large bodies move slowly. And whether brethren of sufficient importance to be delegates would like to leave their business and spend two months at once attending to Church affairs, is a question for them to decide. Some of our annual conferences contain 250 and many of them over 150 preachers; add

as many laymen, protract the sessions to two or three weeks, and where will you find accommodation for three, four, or five hundred men annually for so long a time? The presiding elders in eastern conferences usually range from three to six, and in the western conferences from five to ten; add as many laymen to the bishop's council, with their local views and prejudices, and their want of knowledge as to the work and the laborers, and we reckon that making the appointments will prove to be a tedious operation. But we presume that many long years will pass ere the Church generally will ask for such a representation as this movement contemplates. And as to what would be a safe and suitable plan of lay representation, I acknowledge myself unprepared to suggest, and would rather

wait for time to develop our wants, and the indications of Providence for the best method of supplying them.

Objection Third. The bishops own all the Church property, and have an undue influence in the government.

Own all the Church property! If that were only true, would n't we be rich? Only six bishops among whom to divide twenty millions of dollars' worth! What a pity that truth should upset the figures and leave the objection without any foundation! Some of our enemies have reiterated this silly falsehood till they almost believe it true. But now for the facts in the premises. I have been called bishop twenty-three years, and yet no house of worship or preacher's house has ever been deeded to me; nay, more, I have never in that long period been promoted to the office

of trustee for any one of your churches or parsonages to my knowledge. A few chapels bear my name, but that gives me neither title nor trusteeship in them. Again: the Discipline says, "Let nine trustees be appointed for holding Church property where proper persons can be procured; otherwise, seven or five." In defining who are proper persons, it says, "No person shall be eligible as a trustee to any of our houses, churches, or schools who is not a regular member of our Church." Here the law of the Church requires nine, seven, or five trustees to hold the property for the general good, and that they shall be regular members—not bishops. The recorder's office contains the proof that laymen, not bishops, hold your property in trust for your benefit. But the bishops wield too much power.

In one respect only we have great power—that is, in appointing the preachers—but not more than is needful to sustain an itinerant interchanging ministry. With less power it could not be done. This, too, is power conferred by those over whom it is exercised, and may be recalled when we abuse it. In all other affairs of the Church our power is quite limited. We have no authority to ordain bishop, elder, or deacon till he is elected and handed over to us for that purpose; and then we have no discretionary power, but must ordain him, whatever doubt we may have of his fitness. In the annual conference we decide questions of law, subject to an appeal to General conference. But in the General conference we are mere moderators, and can decide nothing but points of order, and are

liable to be overruled on appeal to the house. From the days of Asbury to the present the constant tendency has been to diminution of Episcopal power, till we have little left besides our chair in the conference and in the stationing room; and if that should slip from under us, we should be down *flat*. You may, therefore, dismiss all your needless fears of Methodist Episcopal power. Moreover, it may seem strange to you who never examined the subject, but is, nevertheless, true, that the bishops are the only ministers in the Methodist Episcopal Church who have no vote in any conference, quarterly, annual, or General—not even a casting vote in case of a tie or equal number of votes pro and con. Indeed, we are not allowed the right of discussion on any question pending in any conference. If we speak

it is by courtesy, not by legal right. But still worse, we are the only men in the Church who have no appeal. When a member is expelled, he can appeal to quarterly conference; if a local preacher be expelled, he can appeal to annual conference; or if a traveling preacher be expelled, he can appeal to General conference; but if a bishop be expelled, as he may be by General conference, he has no appeal till the day of the general judgment. One thing more against our being dangerously armed with power is this: in a member or preacher "improper conduct" is cause of reproof, but in a bishop it is cause of expulsion. Here is the rule to sustain our statement: "Question 1. To whom is a bishop amenable for his conduct? Answer. To the General conference, who shall have power to expel him for im-

proper conduct if they see it necessary." See chapter x, section 1, of Discipline.

Objection Fourth. Methodist polity is not liberal enough for our free civil institutions.

We admit that our Church polity is not in all points exactly modeled after our civil government, nor do we deem it desirable that it should be, but we deny that it is less liberal. As a citizen you are subject to civil authority without your consent, but the Church is a voluntary association, and no man is a subject of her government against his own will. You are compelled by law to pay tax, but your Church dues are free-will offerings. When a citizen is arraigned for crime, has he a right to demand that he be confronted by his accusers and their witnesses? The same right belongs to a member of our

Church. Is the judge restrained from passing sentence on a citizen till found guilty by a jury? Even so can no Church officer pronounce sentence on a member of our Church till found guilty by a committee. Besides, a citizen charged with crime and awaiting his trial is either imprisoned or required to give bail; but our Church knows nothing in her administration of prisons or bail bonds. Again: the state inflicts death or confinement at hard labor in the penitentiary, according to the offense committed; but our Church, even for the highest crimes, inflicts no punishment beyond that of dismembering the offender from her communion, leaving him where she found him, without any civil disability. Then the balance of liberality is decidedly in favor of the Church and against the state. More-

over, in our polity the ends of justice are obtained in a direct and simple manner, without the delay, expense, technicalities, or legal quibbles pertaining to civil jurisprudence. In addition to all these things, there is in the outward structure of our system some resemblance to American institutions. A few hints here are all that need be given to show the analogy. The class may answer to the school district, and the society, made up of several classes, to the township; the circuit, embracing many societies, to the county; the presiding elder's district may answer either to the judicial circuit or to the Congressional district, the annual conference to the state, the General conference to the Congress, and the general superintendency to the chief magistracy of the nation. Now this is coming as near

to the secular institutions of the country as we deem necessary, and certainly as near to them as any other Church government does. We know that in the United States the civil authority is above the ecclesiastical; and to this we not only make no objection, but we as a Church honestly and heartily profess our allegiance to our civil government. See 23d Article of Religion, and the marginal note appended. But while we are law-abiding, we detest all kinds of political oppression on one hand and all mob violence on the other. And we utterly deny the charge of an illiberal Church polity, for we have ever advocated free grace, free sittings, and free communion, and ask, Who does any more?

Having tried to present a rapid view of Methodist Church polity, or, at least,

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Having tried to present a rapid view of Methodist Church polity, or, at least,

of its more prominent features, both in structure and in its practical working, and considered some of the objections commonly urged against it, we now turn our thoughts toward a

CONCLUSION.

In regard to the doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church we conceal nothing. The more this system is investigated the better it is understood, and the better it is understood the more generally and highly it is appreciated. So we think. No man should blindly walk into any Church, but should first satisfy himself as to her creed, her government, and its practical working, and then take his position deliberately, settling the question of his Church relation for life. This done, he should conform to Church

rules and usages, so as to maintain harmony and peace in the body. We trust that Methodists are generally such from conviction, from principle, and from choice, and that their hearts are fixed to walk by the same rules and mind the same things while life endures. The fact of our being in the Church implies an obligation to conform to her Discipline. But we are under more than an implied obligation. We promised, as a condition of being admitted to full membership, in presence of the Church assembled, to observe and keep her rules. And now consistency requires it, and the people, both in and out of the Church, expect us to keep our pledge. To violate it would involve our reputation and peace of mind. Besides, our profession is nothing to be ashamed of. We have

good company and plenty of it. Many of the most influential men and women of the country are with us, not only in name, but in mind and heart. The time was when Methodism was an experiment; the time is when Methodism is a "fixed fact," and a glorious fact, too. At first some of our enemies thought us too insignificant to oppose. One said, "Let the Methodists alone, and in a short time a corn-crib would hold them all." But it would require more cribs than Joseph built in Egypt to hold us now. Then we were a mere handful, but now we are spread into bands. "One shall become a thousand, and a little one a strong nation." Then we were poor, worshiping by courtesy in private dwellings, school-houses, and barns; but the Lord has blessed us with means to provide for ourselves

comfortable churches. At first we had no literary institutions; but now we have all grades of them, from the elementary school to the university, without stint. Then our literature was quite limited; but now we are not ashamed to compare catalogues with any religious publishers in America. Several leading denominations or Churches of this country date back over two centuries, while the Methodist Episcopal Church is only about seventy-five years old, and yet numerically we are perhaps the strongest among them. Doctrinally, Methodism has made a strong impression on Protestant Christendom, moderating the rigid features of other systems, and encouraging a more liberal orthodoxy. But the Lord has favored us with one gift better than numbers, wealth, learn-

good company and plenty of it. Many of the most influential men and women of the country are with us, not only in name, but in mind and heart. The time was when Methodism was an experiment; the time is when Methodism is a "fixed fact," and a glorious fact, too. At first some of our enemies thought us too insignificant to oppose. One said, "Let the Methodists alone, and in a short time a corn-crib would hold them all." But it would require more cribs than Joseph built in Egypt to hold us now. Then we were a mere handful, but now we are spread into bands. "One shall become a thousand, and a little one a strong nation." Then we were poor, worshiping by courtesy in private dwellings, school-houses, and barns; but the Lord has blessed us with means to provide for ourselves

comfortable churches. At first we had no literary institutions; but now we have all grades of them, from the elementary school to the university, without stint. Then our literature was quite limited; but now we are not ashamed to compare catalogues with any religious publishers in America. Several leading denominations or Churches of this country date back over two centuries, while the Methodist Episcopal Church is only about seventy-five years old, and yet numerically we are perhaps the strongest among them. Doctrinally, Methodism has made a strong impression on Protestant Christendom, moderating the rigid features of other systems, and encouraging a more liberal orthodoxy. But the Lord has favored us with one gift better than numbers, wealth, learn-

ing, books, or orthodoxy. He has sent us the Comforter to abide with us forever. Methodism still operates in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. A few years since croakers were insolent, saying, in substance, "Methodism has had its day, but has accomplished its mission and is defunct." But our net increase of 136,000 members last year and the great revivals still in progress show that her enemies are false prophets, and that her course is yet onward toward the millennial glory. So far is Methodism from having accomplished her mission, we consider the work as but fairly begun, and trust that her peaceful banners will soon quietly wave over all the earth. Let us, therefore, hold fast our profession. Yes, brethren, hold on to your doctrine, especially of general atonement, the

witness of the Spirit, and of full salvation. Hold on to your experience of grace. Hold on to your Discipline. Hold on to your peculiar rules and usages, to class meeting and love-feast, to congregational singing and revival operations, to the mourner's bench, and to kneeling in prayer. Hold on to itinerancy, and, as far as may be, to the circuit system; hold on to the presiding eldership and to general superintendency. In a word, hold on to every thing essential to the success of Methodism, for it has saved millions now in heaven, and millions more in Europe and America who are still heading for the world of light and peace above. To God be all the glory in Christ Jesus our Lord! Amen.

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